

## **John Rugenstein Collection on Wendell Willkie**

L300

1879-1959

3 ms. boxes, 1 card file box

Rare Books and Manuscripts Division  
Indiana State Library

Processed by: Jennifer Duplaga, 2004

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### **Biographical Note:**

John Rugenstein was born in Indianapolis on January 9, 1889, the son of Carl and Dorathea (Lembke) Rugenstein. Early in his life he worked for the Indianapolis News as a paperboy. In 1903, he was promoted to office boy, under the direction of O.R. Johnson, business manager for that newspaper. Within a few years he was again promoted, this time to credit manager of the Indianapolis News, a position he held until 1930 when health problems forced him to retire.

Rugenstein was heavily involved in civic activities and was a member of many local organizations, such as the Indianapolis Humane Society, the Indiana Historical Society, the Marion County Historical Society and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. He was an avid collector of historical documents and memorabilia, particularly of Abraham Lincoln, James Whitcomb Riley and Wendell Willkie. Rugenstein married Florence Meyer on January 1, 1910. They had two children together, Dorothy and Donald. John Rugenstein died on November 20, 1970.

Wendell Willkie was born on February 18, 1892 in Elwood, Indiana. He was the fourth of six children born to Herman Francis and Henrietta (Trisch) Willkie. In 1913, Willkie graduated from Indiana University. Lacking the funds to immediately continue on to law school, he moved to Kansas where he worked as a teacher and saved money so he could continue with his education. He left his job in November 1914 to work as a chemist in a Puerto Rican sugar factory. By 1915 this lucrative position made it possible for him to return to school. Willkie graduated with a law degree from Indiana University in 1916.

After graduation, Willkie returned to Elwood, where he worked in his parent's law office. Within a year, war broke out in Europe and Willkie voluntarily signed up to serve. Before his departure overseas in 1918, he married Edith Wilk of Rushville, IN, with whom he would eventually have one child.

After returning from the war in 1919, Willkie was employed by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Akron, Ohio, where he worked as part of the legal staff. Over the next twenty years, he held a variety of important positions in large companies, such as Northern Ohio Power and Light Company and Commonwealth & Southern Corporation, which helped him to become well known throughout the business community.

In 1940, Willkie, frustrated by the politics of Franklin Roosevelt, decided to run for the presidency in the upcoming election. Willkie won the Republican nomination, but eventually lost the general election.

After the loss, Willkie wrote political columns in newspapers and magazines. In 1943, he decided to try again for the presidency, but left the race early after a disappointing response by voters in the Wisconsin primary in April 1944. In September of that same year, Willkie began suffering from heart problems. He died of a heart attack in October 1944.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

This collection contains materials assembled by John Rugenstein regarding the presidential campaign of Wendell Willkie. Included in this collection is campaign memorabilia such as buttons, literature, poetry, postcards, music, stickers and phonograph records. Also included is the correspondence of the various state and local Willkie Clubs, founded in 1940 to promote and support Willkie in his campaign. These items are divided geographically. There is information on the national (Associated of Willkie Clubs of America), state (Indiana Willkie Clubs) and Indiana county level organizations. After Willkie's defeat in the election, these clubs reorganized to form the Independent Clubs of America, of which some correspondence is also included. Correspondents include Homer J. Capehart, J. Edgar Hoover, James Frenzel, H. C. Stimson, Willis Coval, Charles Trowbridge, Lew Wallace, Jr. and Charles Halleck.

This collection also contains correspondence from other organizations that supported the Willkie campaign effort. These organizations include the National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government and the Indiana Republican Committee. Correspondents include Arch N. Bobbitt, Walter Sundlum, James Bradford and Amos Pinochet.

In 1940, the city of Elwood, Indiana held a notification ceremony in which Wendell Willkie received the official Republican nomination as the presidential candidate. This collection contains the correspondence that was involved during the ceremony planning process. Also included is the Nutzum family correspondence. Clara Nutzum, her father J.M. Nutzum, and their family lived in Elwood, Indiana and were heavily involved in planning of the notification ceremony. These letters include correspondence between Clara and J.M. Nutzum with other members of the Nutzum clan in other parts of the state and country. This collection also contains some memorabilia from the ceremony such as a Willkie fan and a souvenir program.

This collection was put together through the efforts of John Rugenstein and includes some of his correspondence used to acquire some of these materials. He created an inventory of the items that he collected as well as bibliography of books and articles related to the life and campaign of Wendell Willkie.

This collection also contains photographs, newspaper/magazine articles, valentines, and letters written by Willkie to James Frenzel. In addition to the typed bibliography, Rugenstein also created a newspaper index of Willkie-related items during the campaign. Items are arranged chronologically. In some cases, copies of the articles have been placed in envelopes in the index.

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**Box and Folder Listing:****Box 1.****Folder**

1. Valentines, 1879-1883, n.d.
2. Cards, 1879-1905, n.d.
3. Campaign Memorabilia- Buttons, stamps, stickers and pins, 1940, n.d.
4. Campaign Memorabilia- Literature, 1940, n.d.
5. Campaign Memorabilia- Music, 1940
6. Campaign Memorabilia- Poems, 1940, n.d.
7. Campaign Memorabilia- Phonograph record "Swing Along with Willkie," n.d.
8. Campaign Memorabilia- phonograph record "Willkie Victory March" and letter, 1940
9. Campaign Memorabilia- Postcards, ca. 1940
10. Campaign Memorabilia- Miscellaneous, 1940, n.d.
11. Indiana Republicans, 1940
12. Indiana Willkie Clubs- Correspondence, June-Nov. 1940, n.d.
13. Indiana Willkie Clubs- Organization/Membership, 1940, n.d.

**Box 2.**

1. Indiana Willkie Clubs- Transcripts, n.d.
2. National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, 1940
3. Notification Ceremony- Correspondence
4. Notification Ceremony- Memorabilia
5. Notification Ceremony- Nutzum Family Correspondence, Apr-June 1940 (folder 1 of 4)
6. Notification Ceremony- Nutzum Family Correspondence, July 1940 (folder 2 of 4)
7. Notification Ceremony- Nutzum Family Correspondence, August 1940 (folder 3 of 4)
8. Notification Ceremony- Nutzum Family Correspondence, Sept.-Nov. 1940, Feb. 1944, n.d. (folder 4 of 4)
9. Willkie Clubs- Adams and Allen Counties, 1940
10. Willkie Clubs- Bartholomew, Brown, and Carroll Counties, 1940
11. Willkie Clubs- Clark, Clinton, and Daviess Counties, 1940
12. Willkie Clubs- Delaware, Dubois, Fayette, and Floyd Counties, 1940

13. Willkie Clubs- Grant, Greene, Hamilton and Hancock Counties, 1940
  14. Willkie Clubs- Harrison, Hendricks, Henry and Howard Counties, 1940
- Box 3.
1. Willkie Clubs- Jasper, Jay, Jefferson, and Jennings Counties, 1940
  2. Willkie Clubs- Knox and Kosciusko Counties, 1940
  3. Willkie Clubs- Lake County, 1940
  4. Willkie Clubs- Madison, Marion, Marshall and Martin Counties, 1940
  5. Willkie Clubs- Miami, Montgomery, Newton and Noble Counties, 1940
  6. Willkie Clubs- Orange, Posey, Putnam, Rush and Shelby Counties, 1940
  7. Willkie Clubs- Spencer County, St. Joseph, Starke, and Sullivan Counties, 1940
  8. Willkie Clubs- Switzerland, Tippecanoe, Tipton, and Union Counties, 1940
  9. Willkie Clubs- Vanderburgh, Vermillion, Vigo and Wabash Counties, 1940
  10. Willkie Clubs- Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wells and White Counties, 1940
  11. Correspondence- Wendell Willkie, 1938-1941
  12. Associated of Willkie Clubs of America, 1940-1941
  13. Independent Clubs of America, 1940-1941, n.d.
  14. Correspondence- John Rugenstein, 1940-1951, n.d.
  15. Newspaper/Magazine articles, 1940-1959, n.d.
  16. Legacy of Wendell Willkie, 1945-1950, n.d.
  17. Bibliography of Willkie Articles/Books, n.d.
  18. Photographs, n.d.
  19. Inventory of Willkie Memorabilia, n.d.
  20. Envelopes, 1940-1946

Card File.

1940-1946          Index of Willkie related newspaper articles.

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**Collection Information:**

*Size of Collection:*    3 mss boxes, 1 card file box

*Collection Dates:*    1879-1959

*Provenance:*          John Rugenstein in 1967

*Restrictions:*          None

*Reproduction Rights:*    Permission to reproduce, exhibit, or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Manuscript Section, Indiana State Library.

*Alternate format*      None

*Related Holdings:*      B166 available in the Manuscript Section

*Notes:*                  None

